



TONY KURTZ

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 50th ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

2021 Assembly Bill 226

Relating to: playing or singing the national anthem at certain sporting events

Wednesday, April 28, 2021

Assembly Committee on State Affairs

Thank you, Chairman Swearingen for holding a public hearing on Assembly Bill 226 (AB 226) today and thank you to the members of the committee for taking my testimony.

Enjoying a sporting event with friends and family is a cherished activity for many Americans. Sitting down in the stands for a baseball game in the summer or watching a Friday night lights high school football game in the fall are some of America's favorite pastimes. This freedom we have, to enjoy watching or competing in these games is a freedom that is, in fact, not free. Many men and women have paid the ultimate price for our country's freedom. Being reminded at these sporting events of the sacrifices that our service members had to make in order for us to enjoy our freedoms is a very important tradition that must be maintained.

As someone who has served in the military for 20 years, I am very passionate about our national anthem. I am worried that our pride in our country is diminishing and the fear of causing controversy may deter stadiums from playing the national anthem at sporting events like we have seen happen in many other states already. As a veteran and someone who deeply believes in our nation, I think our national anthem is a unifying theme in our country. In fact, this tradition began in 1862 during the height of the civil war. This song has a way of bringing our country together, and that is as important now as it's ever been.

As a veteran, when someone kneels for the national anthem, that truly does bother me, but the truth is, I served so that they have the freedom to kneel if they so choose. "Freedom is not free" is a sentiment that I fear is being lost in our country. One simple way of reminding our fellow Wisconsinites of the sacrifices that our service men and women have made is the playing of our national anthem. Let's celebrate our nation, let's play the national anthem at sporting events and let's be proud of our country and our service members.

Thank you again for the opportunity to present my testimony on AB 226 relating to the playing of the national anthem at sporting events.



PATRICK TESTIN

STATE SENATOR

DATE: April 28, 2021

RE: **Testimony on Assembly Bill 226**

TO: The Assembly Committee on State Affairs

FROM: Senator Patrick Testin

Thank you Chairman Swearingen and State Affairs Committee members for hearing my testimony in support of Assembly Bill 226 (AB 226).

Every day, we are pummeled with the message that America is divided. Some will tell you that our traditions no longer have purpose. Recently, even our national anthem has come under fire. NBA owner Mark Cuban garnered support from anti-anthem activists when he stopped playing the song at Dallas Mavericks home games.

American symbols like the flag and our national anthem have the power to unite. They remind us that we share a common bond. That is why I joined with Representative Tony Kurtz to author the Star Spangled Banner Act. Passage of AB 226 will ensure the playing of the national anthem before all sporting events held in venues that were built using taxpayer funding.

Much like the Federal Flag Code, this legislation was purposely drafted broadly and does not provide any penalties. It does not require that all attendees sing.

There is precedent for this. Wisconsin Code Chapter 118 requires that each school day begin with either a recitation of the pledge or the singing of the national anthem.

It is reasonable to expect that venues constructed with taxpayer dollars show the same respect for our country that we require of our schools and here in the Capitol. For some, it also a chance to honor those who served and/or are serving in our armed forces.

The anthem reminds us of who we are, where we came from and who we want to be as a country. I hope you can join me, the Wisconsin American Legion, and the VFW Department of Wisconsin in support of this bill.



To: Members, Assembly Committee on State Affairs
From: Wisconsin Park and Recreation Association
Date: April 28, 2021
RE: Comments for Information Only on AB 226

WPR submits these comments for information only regarding Assembly Bill 226. WPR is a membership association that represents over 1,200 individuals delivering a broad spectrum of services in Wisconsin. Our members include Park, Recreation and Therapeutic Recreation professionals in local, county, state, school district, private and agency settings. WPR also represents public Park and Recreation Boards and Commissions, students, commercial firms, and Emeritus (retired) members.

Across the state, our members are administering thousands of games every year on public fields – from in-house recreational leagues to competitive travel tournaments. Engagement in recreational sports spans across all ages from tee ball all the way up to adult softball leagues. Given our role in delivering recreational sports, we have some questions about the need for this legislation and how logistically it will be managed on the ground by our members.

Our members wholeheartedly support the playing of the national anthem at games and events. However, depending on the appropriate venue and league level, this administratively could be unmanageable. Would equipment be needed at every youth sports game on local fields? How could this effect the timing of keeping activities on schedule? Would a recreational staff person have to attend each game to ensure the anthem is played? Would we need to add more staff to ensure compliance?

We appreciate the intent of this legislation and as stated earlier, our members support the playing of the national anthem – but have numerous questions about the need and implementation aspects of this bill. We plan to continue to review this legislation with our members and standby as a resource on this topic.